

Summary of Project: Medical Screening Program for former Nevada Test Site Workers

Phase II Project: Medical Screening Program for former Nevada Test Site Workers

Site: Nevada Test Site

Consortium: Boston University School of Public Health, (BUSPH); Southern Nevada Building and Construction Trades Council; University of California, San Francisco, (UCSF), in cooperation with the University of Nevada School of Medicine Department of Family and Community Medicine.

Targeted group of former workers: Workers employed primarily in the construction trades at the Nevada Test Site during the nuclear testing era, 1951 to 1992. This includes workers who participated in the construction and maintenance of tunnels, shafts and drillholes or handled contaminated materials that were used in these areas. NTS construction workers who worked during the atmospheric testing years are also included.

Phase II start date: January 1998

Toll-free telephone numbers:

For information about the screening program and eligibility: 1-888-636-8161.

For information about medical protocols, screening results and follow-up: 1-888-809-5055

This project includes the following tasks:

- 1) Identify and locate those former workers who based on the results of the phase I needs assessment are at significant risk of adverse health effects;
- 2) Ascertain the health concerns of former workers identified in task 1 related to their past employment;
- 3) Communicate risk information to former workers regarding the nature of their health risk and discuss the actions that could be taken;
- 4) Provide medical screening to targeted former worker populations based on exposure history and the availability of acceptable screening tests;
- 5) Assist in the coordination of referrals, diagnostic workup, and followup treatment, including coordination with worker's compensation and other existing insurance and benefits programs;
- 6) Ensure dialogue with local parties concerned with the project; and
- 7) Evaluate former workers satisfaction with the project.

Unique aspects of this project:

Outreach: A potentially eligible cohort of approximately 11,000 living construction trades workers and some others who worked in the testing areas of the NTS has been identified. Several methods are used to find and reach these former NTS workers and inform them of their potential eligibility for the screening program, including the network of personal contacts of the Union

Project Manager in Las Vegas, herself a former NTS worker of 25 years; union efforts in sending out mailings to their members, advertising in their newsletters, making announcements at meetings and displaying posters in union halls, and contact with the Health Care Financing Administration to obtain addresses of cohort members over 65 years of age.

Number and location of clinics: Screening exams are held quarterly (for 3 days) at the facilities of the Family Practice Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. The project utilizes occupational medicine physicians from UCSF and BUSPH, and Family Medicine faculty and residents from the University of Nevada School of Medicine.

Description of medical evaluations: Medical screenings consist of a medical and occupational history questionnaire completed by the participant and four diagnostic tests and a focused physical exam performed by one of the staff physicians. The tests include a hearing test; a breathing test or pulmonary function test (PFT); a chest x-ray; and a blood test. All participants are offered all screening tests (workers who worked in areas where devices were being tested were exposed to many of the same hazards).

Local occupational health training: The project is creating a need for local occupational medicine expertise. Project staff physicians are offering occupational health training for medical residents in Las Vegas. The teaching program, which has been developed for the University of Nevada Family and Community Medicine Program, incorporates didactic teaching along with clinical skill development.

Confidentiality of data: The confidentiality of participants' personal information and medical screening results is ensured at all times by restricting access to both paper and electronic records to project staff. Unique project ID numbers are generated for all participants so that personal identifiers such as names or social security numbers are not used.

Assistance with referrals and workers' compensation: Participants are assisted with referrals for needed follow-up care both at the time of screening and at the time of notification of results (approximately 6 weeks after the screening). If necessary, participants will be advised to seek medical follow-up with their personal physicians, and/or with specialists in occupational diseases. The UCSF clinical staff is available by telephone at a toll-free number to provide follow-up medical consultation regarding appropriate specialty referrals and information on workers' compensation.

Advisory Panel: A forum for dialogue with local parties is the project Advisory Panel which performs broad oversight of the operation and effectiveness of the program. The Panel meets each year in Las Vegas to advise the project team. Panel members include representatives from participating unions, NTS retirees, Bechtel Nevada (NTS primary contractor), the Nevada State Health Division, Clark County Health Department, University of Nevada Medical School, and the local medical society. Representatives from DOE NVO attend as ex-officio members. A NIOSH representative and scientists with expertise in relevant disciplines including clinical occupational medicine, epidemiology, toxicology, industrial hygiene, and health and worker education are also part of the Panel.